[redacted] Harold Weisberg

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION April 1969

Dear [redacted] Harold :

I am sending you this letter in anticipation of a long report which will deal in full detail both with the issue discussed below and with an important related matter which, irrespective of what I say below, proves the same thing. When you recognize the significance of what has been learned, you will understand why I feel that you would wish to hear of these researches now in summary, rather than to wait and read the full account later. Although several matters are involved, here I shall discuss only the one that is most important. I hope that the succinctness of this version does not cause you confusion.

It is absolutely certain-- beyond the least doubt, and secure from any contrary explanation, that none of the three cartridge cases which were found near the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository was used in the assassination-- none of them.

You can see good and informative photos of the cases in Thompson's Six Seconds in Dallas, pp. 144f. I rely on Thompson for his description of the cases and for his conclusion regarding the significance of the dent in the mouth of cartridge case CE 543. If you consult Thompson beyond that, read him with caution, for he gravely misinterprets the significance of certain other phenomena.

Here, briefly, is a description of the three cartridge cases. (Since CEs 544 and 545 are similar in all important respects, I shall refer to them as a single cartridge case, CE 544/545):

(see bottom of p.2)

CE 543 is dented at the mouth of the cartridge case.
CE 544/545 bears a small dent (like a dimple) on the shoulder of the case.

The dents occurred in the manner described in Exhibits 3 and 4 of the attached sheet. This was verified by physical tests with a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle (M-C) and cartridges. In all the tests, dents were produced which correspond exactly to the dnets in CEs 543 and 544/545. The tests confirm beyond doubt that this is the manner in which the dents occurred. By the way, it is not at all unusual for rifles of M-C vintage and M-C quality to produce shoulder dimples like the one on CE 544/545. Note especially that CE 543 was thrust from the clip into the chamber as an unbulleted cartridge case. CE 544/545 contained a bullet when it was chambered.

CE 543 (dented case mouth) cannot have been fired during the assassination partly for the reason that Thompson gives, but also for other-- more important-- reasons which I shall discuss in the full report. Presently it is sufficient for you to know merely that when a bullet is fired from a cartridge case, the case mouth invariably retains the round shape of the rifle chamber. This applies not merely to M-C cartridge cases, but to all cartridge cases.

Let me preface my remarks about CE 544/545 with an explanation. When a bulleted cartridge is fired in a rifle chamber, the gasses that are released by the burning propellant powder expand with fierce intensity and produce enormous pressure. Before the bullet leaves the barrel (actually, even before it leaves the cartridge case), the fantastically high pressure expands the brass of the cartridge case and presses it tightly-- very, very tightly-- against the steel wall of the rifle chamber.

The pressure that is produced by the firing of a bulleted 6.5 mm M-C cartridge is 37,000 pounds per square inch, more than enough-- far, far more than enough-- completely to remove the dimple on the shoulder of cartridge case CE 544/545. In fact, physical tests

with a M-C rifle and cartridges invariably caused shoulder dimples to be blasted out and all evidence of them to be completely obliterated. This is not a phenomenon that is peculiar to the M-C; it occurs in all rifles whenever they fire bulleted cartridges with similarly dimpled cases. It is an inviolate ballistic principle.

The meaning of this is clear, unequivocal: a bullet was never fired from CE 544/545. The evidence is unassailable; it is not possible for shoulder dimples to survive the shooting of a bulleted cartridge. The cartridge case must assume the shape of the chamber. There are equally unassailable reasons for asserting that CE 543 also never fired a bullet; I shall discuss them in the full report. In all three instances, the bullets were manually removed from the cartridge cases before their primers were blasted by the firing pin of the M-C rifle.

If you bother to read the testimony bearing on the microscopic examination of the cartridge cases, do not be led to believe that any of it negates what I have described to you. In fact, it fully corroborates what I have said. This, too, I shall discuss later.

The conclusion that the cases were not used in the assassination does not rest entirely on the existence of dents on the cases; it is possible to prove the same thing with equal validity by another means. But the existence of the dents is an important aspect of the evidence, and it is absolutely unassailable by contrary argument of any kind-- and the evidence cannot now be destroyed or doctored; it is all in, and it is all solid.

I want you to know at least that much now. Later I shall tell you in explicit detail what happened to these cases before the assassination occurred. There is a good deal to say; every mark on the cartridge cases is a voice, and together they whisper a true and explicit story that cannot be refuted.

I am satisfied, too, that FBI firearms expert Robert A. Frazier knew all this from the very beginning of his activity in the investigation, even while Oswald was alive. Frazier knew first, and Frazier knew best.

Although there is other important evidence which bears on what I have told you, evidence which by itself is conclusive, the dents alone absolutely free the three cartridge cases from consideration as part of the shooting paraphenalia. By powerful implication-- indeed, by undeniable implication-- this evidence also frees the M-C rifle from consideration as one of the murder weapons, and Oswald himself from consideration as one of the assassins. Even if it was not previously clear to everybody that Oswald was never more than an innocent patsy, the evidence of the cartridge cases clearly indicates that the only useful function which the rifle served was to implicate Oswald in a crime that he did not commit, a crime that he cannot have committed.

Stay well.

Dick Bernabei

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CE 543
DENTED CASE
MOUTH

CE 544/545
DENTED CASE SHOULDER

EXHIBIT 1

MANNLICHER-CARCANO ACTION (OPEN)

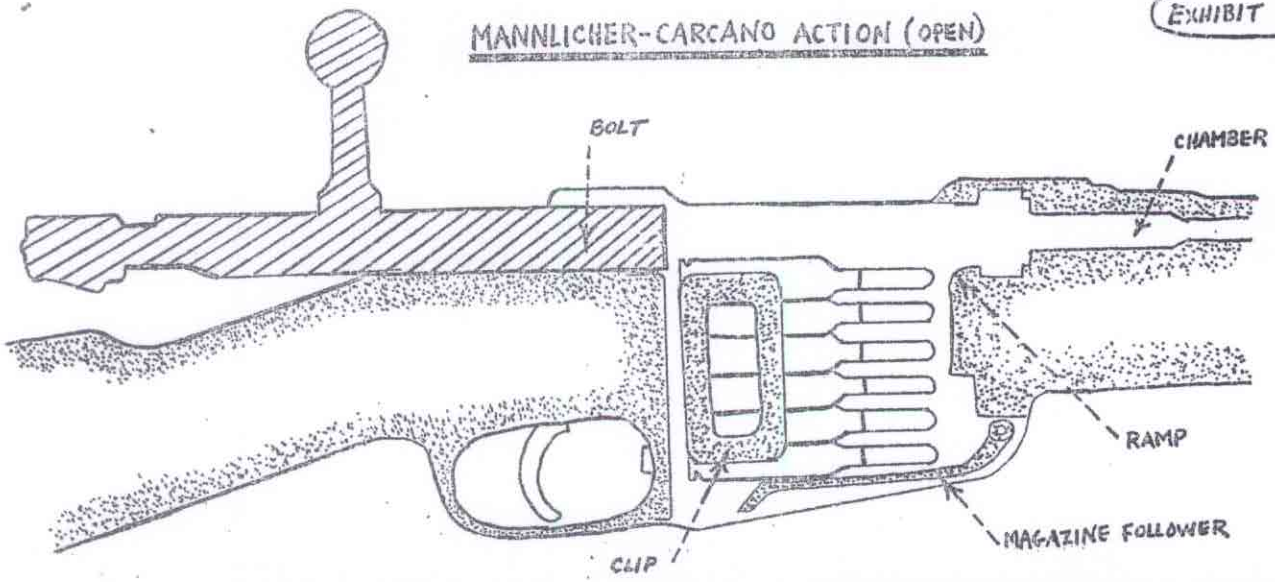


EXHIBIT 2

NOMENCLATURE (AMMUNITION)

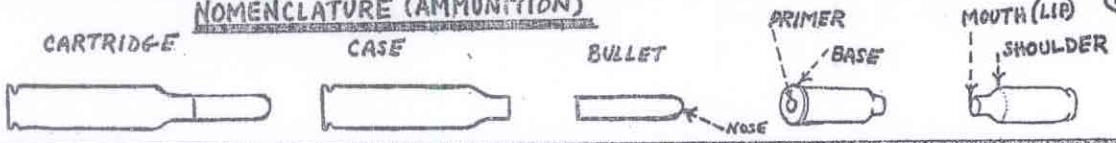
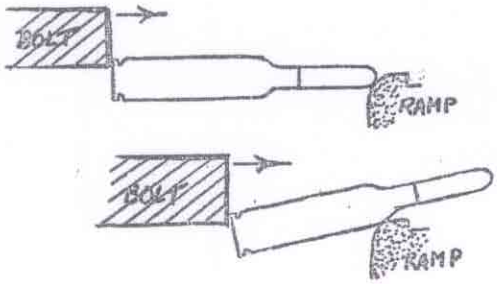


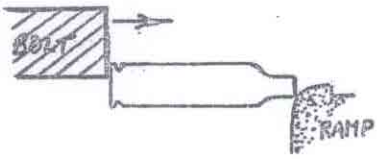
EXHIBIT 3



HOW THE CASE SHOULDERS WERE DENTED (CEs 544 and 545)

As the bolt thrusts the bulleted cartridge forward, the nose of the bullet strikes the ramp. The cartridge tilts, and the bolt continues its forward thrust on the tilted cartridge. The shoulder of the case strikes the ramp <u>and is dented</u>. The bolt thrusts the cartridge into the chamber, and closes over it.

EXHIBIT 4



HOW THE CASE MOUTH WAS DENTED (CE 543)

As the bolt thrusts the unbulleted cartridge case forward out of the clip, the mouth of the case strikes the ramp <u>and is dented</u>. Continuing its forward motion, the bolt thrusts the unbulleted case into the chamber.